

Message Text

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SUBJ: JORDANIAN PM RIFAI'S COMMENTS ON US-UAE RELATIONS

REF: AMMAN 3936

1. WE ARE PUZZLED AT RIFAI ACCOUNT OF SUWAIDI'S APPROACH TO JORDANIANS, IMPLICATION OF WHICH IS THAT THERE IS PENT-UP DESIRE IN ABU DHABI FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US, BUT THAT UAEG OFFICIALS ARE FINDING IT HARD TO RAISE SUBJECT DIRECTLY WITH US. WE HAVE NOT FELT THAT COMMUNICATIONS WITH UAEG HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR PROBLEMS HERE. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE HAVE IN PAST YEAR AND MORE BEEN DISCUSSING VARIOUS PROJECTS--ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER, FMS AGREEMENT, REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAN ASSISTANCE, ETC.--

WHICH WOULD GIVE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION TO IMPROVEMENT IN US-UAE RELATIONS. IN EVERY ONE OF THESE PROJECTS BALL IS ENTIRELY IN UAEG COURT. PROBLEM IS NOT IN DISCUSSING SUCH PROJECTS WITH UAEG, NOR IN UAE OFFICIALS' INITIAL REACTION WHICH IS ALMOST ALWAYS ENTHUSIASTIC, BUT IN GETTING OVER-WORKED AND UNDER-STAFFED GOVERNMENT MACHINERY TO FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTATION.

2. ONE CANNOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT THERE IS SOMETHING ON SUWAIDI'S (OR SHAIKH ZAYID'S) MIND THAT HE FEELS RELUCTANT TO RAISE WITH US HERE AND FEELS MUST BE TAKEN UP AT HIGHER LEVEL IN WASHINGTON.

BUT WE ALSO DETECT IN PROCEEDINGS IN AMMAN POSSIBILITY THAT JORDAN-
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SECRET

PAGE 02 ABU DH 01280 170649Z

IANAS ARE TRYING TO CREATE FOR THEMSELVES MEDIATORY ROLE WHERE NONE

MAY REALLY BE NEEDED. THIS IS AFTER ALL ONE OF THE OLDEST GAMES IN DIPLOMACY AND ONE THE ARABS ARE PARTICULARLY FOND OF. WE KNOW JORDANIANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CONTINUING ROLE IN UAE AND ESPECIALLY THAT FLOW OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM UAE DOES NOT DRY UP. WITH RECENT ECONOMIC BELT-TIGHTENING, ABU DHABI HAS HAD TO INFORM MANY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS THAT COMMITMENTS PREVIOUSLY MADE HAVE TO BE RECONSIDERED OR STRETCHED OUT. FROM REMARKS JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR BATAINEH RECENTLY MADE TO ME, I GATHER HIS GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED THAT JORDAN MAY COME IN FOR UNFAIR SHARE OF BELT-TIGHTENING, PARTICULARLY SINCE JORDAN FACES STIFF COMPETITION FROM EGYPT AND SYRIA, TWO VERY POPULAR AND DEMANDING GOVERNMENTS HERE. IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF JORDANIANS WERE SEARCHING ABOUT FOR ANYTHING THAT WOULD GIVE THEM SOME EXTRA MOXIE WITH UAEG (NOT TO MENTION USG).14

3. I SAW AHMAD SUWAIDI FOR AN HOUR AND HALF TWO DAYS AGO AND WE HAD RELAXED CHAT WHICH TOUCHED ON VARIETY OF ASPECTS OF UAE'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE REFERRED TO HIS TRIP TO JORDAN INDICATING THAT MAIN PURPOSE HAD BEEN TO ENLIST JORDANIAN HELP IN PROVIDING EXPERTS TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON UNIFICATION OF UAE MILITARY AND INTERNAL SECURITY UNITY. ALTHOUGH WE THEN WENT ON TO DISCUSS SOME BILATERAL US-UAE MATTERS, SUWAIDI MADE NO COMMENT ABOUT OVERALL STATE OF US-UAE RELATIONS, NOR DID HE MENTION DESIRE TO BE INVITED TO WASHINGTON. SINCE HE KNOWS WE RECENTLY EXTENDED INVITATION TO RULER OF FUJAIRA AS WELL AS MINISTER OF PETROLEUM OTAIBA, I SEE NO REASON WHY HE WOULD FEEL SHY ABOUT ASKING ME TO SET UP VISIT FOR HIMSELF IF THAT IS WHAT HE WANTS.

4. I AM INCLINED TO CONCLUDE THAT RIFAI APPROACH TO US IS PROBABLY MIXTURE OF CASUAL COMMENTS BY SUWAIDI AND ACTIVIST IMPULSE ON PART OF JORDANIANS FOR REASONS DISCUSSED ABOVE. WHILE WE WANT DISCREETLY TO BE SUPPORTIVE OF CONTINUING JORDANIAN ROLE HERE, I SEE NO NEED FOR, NOR BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM, JORDANIANS ASSUMING INTERLOCUTORY ROLE FOR US WITH UAEG. LINE WHICH RIFAI CLAIMS HE TOOK WITH SUWAIDI--THAT IF HE VIEW CORRECT RESPONSE. WE RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT INSTRUCT AMBASSADOR PICKERING TO REINFORCE THIS LINE WHEN HE NEXT SEES RIFAI, AS WELL AS THANKING HIM FOR PASSING THIS INFORMATION TO US.

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